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THE ISLAND;

OR,

PLAYING AT ROBINSON CRUSOE.



THE ISLAND;
OR,
PLAYING AT ROBINSON CRUSOE

CHAPTER I.

LEFT TO THEMSELVES.



R. and
M r s .
Hamil-
ton liv-
ed in a
very pretty house close to the
border of a lake, in America.
At a short distance off, there

was an island on the lake, and Mr. Hamilton kept a boat, so that very often he would row the children backwards and forwards, or when there was enough wind, they would put up a sail; and when the boat had the sail on, and a union-jack flag flying at the top, you cannot think how pretty she looked. The boat was called "The Pretty Polly," and when she had just had a new coat of paint, I am sure she quite deserved the name.

Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton had four children. First there was Archibald; he was always called Archy, for short. Next came Frederick. Archy was ten years old, and Fred was nine. Then came a little girl called Margaret, or Maggie, who was between six and seven; and the baby, who could only just run alone; and half the time he tumbled down and had to be picked up again; but he was a good little fellow, and did not often

cry. He and Moustaches, the Skye terrier, were great friends; but I think Moustaches was friends with all the children. They would none of them begin to play without him, and he quite understood how to play "hide and seek," and would not begin to bark until some one called out "I spy I," when he would run after the children to catch them, and quite enjoy the fun.

Moustaches was such a hairy little dog; you could scarcely see his eyes. I dare

say you will find a portrait of him somewhere in this book. Everybody called him "Mousy," because Moustaches was such a troublesome word to say.

One lovely morning in July, Mr. Hamilton said to the children, "Come here, all of you; I have something to tell you."

He placed Archy, Fred, and Margaret in a row, and baby climbed upon his lap, and Mousy came up to listen

also, as if he thought himself one of the family.

Then papa said—

“Mamma and I are going away from home for a few days; we are going to New-York. You must be sure and be very good children all the while we are away.”

Archy said—

“I wish I might go too.”

And baby said—

“Me go.”

“You must mind everything Jane tells you,” said papa.

The children all nodded.

“And you mustn’t tumble into the water.”

“No, papa.”

“And you mustn’t tumble out of the window.”

“No, papa.”

“And you mustn’t tumble into the kitchen fire.”

Archy laughed, and they all promised that they would not.

“And now run away, for I am going to be busy.”

The children and Moustaches all ran off; and half-an

hour later the car came round, and they all came to see papa and mamma set off. Dobbin, the horse, would not stand still; he kept running after Fred and Archy to ask for pieces of bread, because the boys were used to feed him. Then the carpet bags had to be placed in the car by James, the man, and James' face got as red as scarlet with stooping under the seat to stow them away, so that when he rose again, Archibald laughed, at which

James said, "It is very rude of you, to laugh in that manner." And so it was.

At length Moustaches was so tired of waiting for the car to set off, and of running backwards and forwards to see if Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton were coming, that he yawned quite loudly to show every one that he was tired; but then we do not expect little dogs to be polite, as we do little boys.

When papa and mamma came out, all the children had to say good-bye, which took

some little time more. However, at length they drove away, leaving three of the children dancing fancy steps upon the gravel, and Archy running after the carriage and clinging on until papa called out in fun, "Whip behind;" and Mousy barking with delight, without knowing what he was delighted at.

The carriage was out of sight, and Archy returned to the house. Moustaches was again quiet, when the chil-

dren looked at one and the other and said—

“Now what shall we do?”

As soon as Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton were gone, Jane went into the kitchen, and Cook said to her—

“I will tell you what I think of doing; there will be no dinner to serve to-day except the children’s, and you can do that; I shall just go down to neighbor Cole’s, and drink tea comfortably there. James is going to drive the van to the city, and

I am sure he will drop me on the road ; wont you, James ?”

James said Yes, of course, and Jane answered—

“Very well, Cook ; only don’t stop away longer than you can help, for you know I am strange here. Mind and come back this evening.”

Jane had only lately come from some distance off, and scarcely knew the place yet.

“Cook answered—

“Well, I will come back to-night, if I can ; at least, if

I am not over-persuaded to stay."

So Cook set off for her friend's house with James, and Jane began to prepare the children's dinner.

Now it so happened that, what with dancing about and playing, Fred became very hungry, and running into the kitchen, he asked Jane to give him something to eat. Jane was in a great hurry, for dinner-time was drawing near, and she told him to go away and not to tease her; so Fred

seized a piece of bread which lay upon the kitchen table, and began to eat it; but he soon found that he was not bread-hungry, so he thrust it into his pocket, thinking that it would do for Mousy, and then ran back into the garden.

As he went he heard Archy calling to him—

“Fred, come here, I say; such fun! We are going to play at ‘Robinson Crusoe;’—haste haste.”

Fred ran as quickly as he

could, while Archy continued talking—

“I am Robinson Crusoe of course. Who’ll be Friday?”

Maggie said she would be Friday; but Fred objected to that, because of her long, light hair, and he would be Friday, and Maggie and the baby were to be the savages, and were to keep dancing on the bank of the lake, while Robinson and he shot at them from behind the bushes—Mousy was to act the goat.

But after a time Maggie

and the baby got tired of acting savages and dancing on the strand while Crusoe and Friday sat comfortable in their cave and discussed what to do, or went backwards and forwards with the goat to watch their movements; and they said they thought it Archy's and Fred's turn to play savages; so Archy proposed that Maggie should be the English captain come to the island to rescue Robinson.

He ran to untie the boat which was fastened up in

the boat-house, that Maggie might jump in to make it look more real.

Baby would have climbed in also, but Archy said he would never sit still, and therefore had best remain on the shore as a savage.

Mousy was already in the boat, and Robinson Crusoe embraced the English Captain, and then in a loud voice said good-bye to the island. Then calling to Friday to follow, Fred got in also, and the boat floated away.

Farther and farther away, farther and farther from home, with no means of getting back again, for Archy had forgotten to put in the oars, and every moment the little boat floated more into the middle of the lake. Mousy gave a short bark, for he did not half like it. Archy and Fred looked at each other but did not speak. After a time Fred said—

“We are going straight towards the island; the current goes that way.”

“All right!” said Archy; “we will land upon the island; that will be Robinson Crusoe in earnest.”

The sun was very hot and high in the heavens, and Maggie had forgotten to put on her sun-bonnet before she began to play, so that she felt very glad when the boat touched the island and all the children jumped on to the land with such force that the poor little boat danced away again, and went into the middle of the lake.

CHAPTER II.

THE ISLAND.



OUR little baby stood upon the shore gazing after the boat in which were his brothers and his sister, until he became frightened and began to cry. He did not like playing savage all by himself. Then he ran back to the house crying quite loudly, until Jane heard him and came out to see

what was the matter. But baby could not speak much; and when Jane asked him where the others were, he could only say "Gar," which meant gone,

"Gone!—where?" said Jane.

Baby did not know how to answer, and Jane felt very frightened, and ran to the spot where she had last seen the children.

She did not know anything about the boat-house or the boat, for she had been at

the house only a few days; so, not finding the children, she thought they must have gone into the country, and hoped they would come back before long. But the dinner-time came and went, and of course they did not come back, for they were on the island; and the afternoon passed, and evening came on, and Jane became very frightened. She did not like to leave baby alone that she might go and look for them, for she did not know whether

he would be safe ; and baby, not knowing what was the matter, but missing his brothers and sister and Mousy, kept fretting all the day through, and could not amuse himself, and would not eat his dinner. And neither Cook nor James came back during the day. I suppose Cook's friends over-persuaded her, as she had said they very likely would.

At first, when the children landed upon the island, they ran backwards and forwards

shouting with delight; but after a short time they became tired of that, and walked more quietly and began to talk.

“What shall we do?” asked Fred.

“Why,” Archy answered, “We are still playing Robinson Crusoe, you know. Here, this little patch of grass amongst the bushes shall be our cave; we can suppose it is a cave. We must begin by picking up dead branches and making a fire.”

“How can we make a fire?”

said Maggie. "We have not any candle to light it with."

"Nor any matches," said Fred.

"Robinson Crusoe struck a light by rubbing two sticks together," said Archy; "we will do the same, only first collect the sticks."

Maggie and Fred gathered all the sticks they could find and carried them to the cave, and fixed them in a little pile. Archy chose two very dry sticks and began rubbing them together. He rubbed

for some time, but they did not catch fire ; then Fred took them and rubbed ; and then Maggie tried, but they would not light. At last Archy said with a sigh—

“I am afraid we must do without a fire ; never mind, it is much too hot a day for one ; we will make believe that it is burning.”

“I am so hungry,” said Maggie.

“It must be a great deal past dinner-time,” said Fred.

“I am sure we might find

something to eat if we looked for it," Archy answered. "Let us all go different ways and search the island; we will meet again at this spot."

"Maggie said she was afraid to go alone; Fred felt much the same, but he was ashamed to say so; so at last it was agreed that they should all go together.

They tied one of their pocket handkerchiefs to a bush near the cave, and then started on their march. They had not gone far when Archy pick-

ed up a thick heavy stick, which he shouldered in case they should be attacked by any dangerous beast.

I think they must have wandered nearly a mile, and they had not found anything to eat, excepting a few berries. When first they set off they had chatted together, but after a very short time they became quite silent, and walked with their eyes on the ground; they had quite left off playing Robinson Crusoe.

Suddenly Mousy began to

bark. Maggie gave a cry, thinking that the dog had seen a wild beast, for nothing would persuade her that there was not lions on the island, and all the children stopped short. Mousy barked more and more, and kept running to a spot in the long grass, and making bites and snaps in the air.

“There must be something alive, there,” said Archy, shouldering his stick.

Maggie drew close to Fred and trembled. It was not

long before they learned the cause of Mousy's anger. There was a movement in the long grass, a rustling noise, and then there came out, hissing and writhing forward, a snake.

Maggie shrieked and threw her arms around Fred, sobbing with terror, while Archy made a violent attack upon the animal, beating at it with his thick stick, blow after blow, while Mousy barked louder than ever. It was a very strong snake; it took a long time to kill; but it was killed

at last, and Archy stopped beating the place and panted with excitement.

When Maggie could speak, she said—

“I think it must be a rattle-snake.”

But Fred said—

“No; it is a cobra.”

I do not think it was either the one or the other, for it looked very small when it was dead; but one would have thought that Archy felt at least a foot taller, by the way

he walked away from the place.

They resumed their search for something to eat, but without finding anything. By this time the bright sky had become overcast, and the wind howled amongst the trees, and the air felt cold, so that poor little Maggie in her thin chintz frock shivered as she walked.

“I think we are going to have a storm,” said Archy; “perhaps we had better go back to the cave.”

They returned sadly to the place where they had tied the handkerchief, and sat down on the ground in silence.

The wind rose higher and whistled more loudly through the trees, and large drops fell every now and then, so that the children looked about for some more sheltered place to shield them from the coming storm. They had scarcely reached a thicker part of the island, when the thunder burst upon them, and the lightning divided the dark

sky in such fearful flashes, that Maggie screamed and threw herself upon her face upon the ground.

Had Archy and Fred been a little older, they would have known that they were running into more danger by taking shelter under the trees, for trees attract lightning; but they did not think of that. Yet in all this danger into which they had placed themselves, the lightning did not strike them. How was that? Because the God who made

the lightning was taking care of them through all the day. You have heard that a little sparrow cannot fall on the ground without God seeing it, and God loves little children a great deal more than sparrows.

CHAPTER III.

SUNSET.



T length
the storm
passed off;
the light-
ning and
the thunder

ceased, and the rain left off
falling, but still Maggie lay
upon the ground and did not
speak. Poor Mousy also
crouched down in terror at
the noise, and whined every

now and then. Archy went to his sister and raised her from the ground. Her little frock was drenched with the rain, her tangled hair was fallen over her face, and her eyes were swollen with crying. Both Archy and Fred tried to comfort her, but she still cried and sobbed.

“I am so cold and so hungry ; let me lie there, I had rather : Oh ! I wish we had never come ; I wish we were at home again ; I am sure it was very wicked of us to get

into the boat without leave, and now we shall be starved and die on the island. Oh, papa and mamma, I wish you would come!"

And still she cried and sobbed, and Archy and Fred could not comfort her.

"If I only had something to give her to eat," said Fred; "I would not so much care for myself."

Suddenly he remembered, and placing his hand in his pocket drew out the piece of bread which he had put there

in the morning, with an exclamation of joy, and gave it to his little sister. Maggie would have shared it with her brothers, but they, like good little fellows, hungry as they were, insisted on her eating it herself, and walked away a little distance that they might not look at the bread too much.

It is such little boys who make noble hearted men.

It was past their tea-time, and the sun was going down. With all the grief and the

fear of the day, Maggie was getting sleepy.

Darker and darker it grew; the sun went quite down, and Archy sighed as he saw him disappear, for they thought they should feel more lonely in the dark. They chose a sheltered place where the rain had not reached, and Archy made his little sister lie down and try to sleep. He told Mousy to do the same, that he might keep Maggie warm; and the child threw her arms round the little dog, and they

went to bed together. Still Maggie could not sleep. She kept sobbing quietly to herself, and thinking of her mamma, and wishing she were at home.

Fred sat on the ground near his sister, and now his head nodded forward and his eyes closed, and Archy was left watching alone. Then in the darkness there came back to him the words that Maggie had said—

“I think we were very wicked to get into the boat

without leave; and now we shall be starved and die on the island."

It was Archy who had proposed getting into the boat, and who had unfastened it, and pushed it off. He had led his younger brother and sister into the mischief. Now he could remember that something had checked him when first he thought of it, for he knew his papa would not approve of their going, but he had not chosen to listen to that "something."

And now supposing little Maggie died of cold and hunger!

Archy was greatly distressed; he feared a return of the storm; he feared that more snakes might be hidden in the grass; he feared the darkness which was coming on. Fred and Maggie were now both asleep and he was quite alone.

He buried his face in his hands to think what amidst all these fears he should do. He did what I hope you will do, little children, when you

have done wrong and are sorry for it, and when you are frightened and sad; he did what all good boys and all good men will do in such a case: he raised his head, rose, and then knelt to pray to God, to pray for help and safety.

Then Archy took off his jacket and laid it over his little sister and Fred, and sat down again, for he did not like to go to sleep lest any more snakes should come.

You have heard, I dare say, that a boat will drift different

ways in the water according to the way the wind blows.

Now the change of wind turned the tide of the lake, and in the afternoon the boat, which had been tossing about in the middle of the water, tossed back again to the bank of Mr. Hamilton's garden, and there lay rubbing close up to the side.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RESCUE.



R C H Y

was still sitting looking towards home, and Maggie and

Fred still slept. The night grew more and more dark, so that the little boy held his breath to listen to every sound, and started each time the wind moved the trees and bushes near him.

At length the moon came out from behind a cloud, and threw a broad light upon the water. Archy saw a dark object rocking to and fro, and he remembered how the boat had drifted back into the middle of the lake, and thought that it must be she. But a little later he heard noises coming nearer and nearer, and then a grating sound, and then footsteps quite close. He did not know what it might be; the darkness and the strange place and the

long tiring day together overcame him; he felt frightened, and he cried aloud.

The cry woke up Fred and Maggie, who started to their feet; and little Moustaches, who began to bark; and the next moment the bushes were parted, and in the moonlight there stood before all the children their own papa.

At the very moment that Archy was asking God to send help to them Mr. Hamilton returned home. Only

think how distressed both he and Mrs. Hamilton must have been when they heard from Jane that she could not find the children. Papa ran at once into the garden, saw the boat unmoored from the boat-house and guessed the truth. Oh, how anxiously he got into another boat! how quickly he pulled to the island, and how eagerly he jumped on shore.

You may be sure that none of the children were silent when they saw him. Maggie

sprang into his arms, and Fred and Archy clung to him, and they made all the haste they could to get back to the boat. Mamma was waiting for them on the home side, and carried Maggie up to the house, where there was a bright fire to warm and dry them, and something was ready for them to eat.

The next day, when all their cold and hunger and griefs were forgotten, Mr. Hamilton told Archy as they stood in the boat-house, that

he was now of an age to know right from wrong without requiring every special thing to be mentioned, and that that "something" which had warned him the day before not to get into the boat was Conscience; and that if he would be a happy boy, and afterwards a happy man, Conscience must be obeyed.

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